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AUSTRIAN EXPLANATIONS

American newspapers do well to insist, as they are doing, that by their own explanation of the Ancona sinking the Austrians convict themselves, whether the Ancona did or did not try to run away.

The submarine had a perfect right to fire upon the Ancona as long as she did try to run away. But when the Ancona, because of the submarine's fire, stopped and surrendered, the Austrians had no right either to continue the shell fire or to use a submarine against the vessel until all the passengers had an opportunity to leave the ship.

The Austrian explanation for launching a torpedo before the passengers had left the ship is that another vessel was rapidly approaching; but this is no excuse at all. No matter what some other vessel was going to do, the duty of the submarine was to get the people off the Ancona, once she had surrendered, before destroying her.

THE WOMEN AND THE WAR

Women of America and France have acquired the habit of doing their own thinking. The peace-at-any-price advocates pointed to that fact, and predicted that, on this account, women would be instrumental in putting an end to war. Perhaps they will. But the thinking women of France, it has been told, have urged their men to fight to the last ditch so that their children might not again be plunged into strife. Yesterday saw a gathering representing 40,000 women, assembled at a Washington hotel, to urge an adequate navy for this country.

This meeting was all the more striking when it is contrasted with the enthusiasm exhibited here only last spring over peace propaganda exploited through Nazimova in "The War Bride." Since then women have not gotten more belligerent. But they have been thinking. Their mental processes have brought them squarely against the conclusion that preparedness may be a duty, even for those who love peace, and that preparedness, in certain circumstances, may be a factor in maintaining peace.

On the platform at yesterday's meeting of the Woman's Section of the Navy League, sat suffragists and "antis." They were brought together by patriotism, a bigger thing than factional struggles, and the occasion was a striking refutation of the claim that women cannot forget their personal differences when they are working together for a cause.

SUSPENDING SENTENCES

The Department of Justice has directed that steps be taken in connection with an Ohio case, to determine the authority of a Federal judge to suspend sentences. That power has been widely assumed and exercised, and there have been repeated protests against it. The Supreme Court, it is said, has never passed on the question.

In an epoch in which new humanitarian rules are widely recognized in the enforcement of the criminal laws, it is not safe to be dogmatic about such matters. Time was when the most rigorous enforcement of law to its last letter was esteemed absolutely necessary in order to terrorize other possible offenders. Nowadays a different view is entertained; there is quite as much purpose of reforming the present offender as of influencing the potential one of the future. On the whole, the new and humane attitude seems decidedly to be the better one. The man who serves a term in the penitentiary has small chance of re-instating himself in the community. His crime may be a pretty technical one though called by a most impressive name: the complexities of modern business methods make this inevitable. A stroke of the legislative pen a few years ago made it possible to lock up men for long terms for giving rebates. The day before that law passed, giving a rebate was merely a clever trick of the transportation trade.

Somewhere, there ought to be lodged the authority to decide on applications for such clemency. If the judges are not entitled to exercise it, somebody else should be clothed with it. Quite possibly, there should be a separation of the judicial authority from the ultimate punitive authority. It is a question deserving most thoughtful consideration. Perhaps the judge who presided over the case ought to decide. Perhaps judge, jury, and prosecuting attorney might well be made a tribunal to determine, quite apart from the trial, whether sentence might be suspended, and under what

conditions. Possibly an entirely separate tribunal should be vested with this authority.

In any case it seems clear that to withdraw entirely the authority to suspend sentences would be a reactionary proceeding. If the judges may not exercise it somebody else ought to.

FOREIGN PLOTS ON OUR SOIL

A year or two ago it was discovered that there was no law under which effectively to reach an undesirable citizen who had employed telephone communication as a means to represent himself as a member of Congress, bearing gifts to big business, in return for which he wanted a consideration. The discovery being made, Congress passed a law to meet the situation.

The plots directed from abroad and carried out in this country, for the destruction of factories, attacks on railroads, blowing up or firing of ships, and the like, have developed another like situation. There is no law dealing with such cases. The ingenuity of the foreign criminals who have been employing such methods to cripple industry in this country has been able to carry on plots without violating laws directly aimed against such things. It is now announced that the Department of Justice is considering the employment of the Sherman anti-trust act as a weapon of defense against such doings. The theory is that these plots against industry and transportation amount to conspiracies against interstate and foreign commerce.

It is a new and edifying stretch of the policy and purpose of that act, already serving a multitude of dubious utilities that its authors never dreamed should be associated with it. It is time for a segregation of these various alleged significations of the law, and for determining legislatively what that act is about. It is fast becoming the omnibus statute against about everything that is not reached by any other law. Congress will, of course, be called upon to give attention to the specific need for measures through which to cope with the bomb plotters and munitions conspirators, and it will be a most delicate subject to handle, for it involves determination of a policy for dealing with conspiracies that are distinctly international in character, and that concern our relations with countries nominally friendly with us. But there must be recognition of the facts, and a determination to be vigorous in dealing with these amazing conditions. If war is to be made on our soil by enemies who maintain the pretense of diplomatic friendliness, then measures must be devised that will tear away the mask and expose and deal with the sinister fact of hatred and violence back of the sham of friendliness.

This legislation is going to be among the most important considered by the coming session. There will be no excuse for palaver and weakness in framing it. The facts must be called for by Congress, and if necessary they must be communicated to it or its committees in proper confidence; but the facts must be somehow placed in possession of the men who are to frame new laws.

MR. CHURCHILL'S DEFENSE

Winston Spencer Churchill, late first lord of the British admiralty, was given an ovation when yesterday he presented his defense in the house of commons, before formally discontinuing his participation in the government and leaving for the front to serve with his regiment. Mr. Churchill laid a convincing statement of his case before the chamber and the world; and nothing said then, or heretofore, by his critics, essentially weakens it.

In the beginning it is to be remembered that Mr. Churchill, as head of the admiralty for a long period before this war, demonstrated the most accurate presence of probable events. He feared Germany's purpose to attack Europe, and realized that the destiny of Great Britain was bound up in standing with France and Russia. He believed, in short, that the triple entente must be made to mean exactly what it has been made to mean since the war began. He foresaw accurately that the one factor that would save Europe from being conquered at the first German on-set was the British fleet. For the great service that it has since rendered, he prepared the fleet with splendid foresight and courageous insistence. At the close of the summer maneuvers in home waters he held the armada at home, provisioned and munitioned to a war basis, and in fact did everything humanly possible to be prepared for the emergency that he foresaw at a time when statesmen of longer experience and supposedly clearer vision did not desecr. He did these last works of preparation without authority of law or, it has been understood, even of his colleagues in the ministry; assumed the responsibility on the theory that it were better that he risk a mistake on the

side of readiness than that Britain be caught utterly off her guard. Mr. Churchill's statement shows that he did not send the relief expedition to Antwerp or the naval expedition to the Dardanelles without serious consideration and the support of the experts of the service. Indeed, in the matter of the Antwerp expedition he shows that long before the government made the move, he pointed out to it the need of timely effort to ward off the very disaster that ultimately came in that quarter. As to both Antwerp and the Dardanelles, he makes Sir John Fisher look very much like an expert who lost his nerve after the disasters were wrought, and then stepped from under while the stepping was easy.

Mr. Churchill's defense was rather an attack than a defense, which is characteristic of the man. It is impossible as yet to be certain what effect it may have on the British public mind; but a fair consideration of the whole situation in England at this time suggests the serious possibility that there may come a revulsion of feeling in his favor that may bring him back into the administration with a larger share in public confidence and in the direction of the war than he has ever held. He has shown himself prominently the man of action, the man who dared even risk mistakes in order to be doing, the man who had the self-possession to keep silent during month after month of unjust accusation, in order that his government might not be injured and his country's cause weakened by premature exposure of unfortunate details.

PENSIONS AND THE TEACHERS

A solemn warning sounded by Henry P. Blair, before the Monday Evening Club, that the time approaches when scores of aged teachers, whose severance from the school system would place them in dire straits, will have to be dropped unless teachers' pension legislation is forthcoming, should be heeded by everyone who has the welfare of the schools at heart, as well as for humanitarian reasons.

Without advertising the fact overmuch the school officials have carried along dozens of these superannuated teachers, hoping, each year, that Congress would see fit to grant some teachers' retirement measure, and that these veteran educators might benefit by it. But the time is coming, Mr. Blair warns, when consideration for the pupils will outweigh that for the teachers.

Salaries are now fairly good, in Washington, he pointed out, but they have not always been so. For many years the teachers here were paid a bare living wage. That is still the case in some grades and special departments. Now that the salaries have been raised it is literal cruelty to turn these veteran teachers out, with no means of support, after salaries have been raised, and pension legislation looms on the horizon. But the school officials are placed between that alternative and that of permitting pupils, at ages when they need most diligent and alert attention, and the influence of vigorous and keen minds, under teachers who have outlived, and outworked, their usefulness.

President Blair is right when he says there is no more serious need in the schools today. There is none that touches such large groups of pupils. The schools can afford to wait for other improvements, for added studies in their curriculum, if this provision for caring for its aged teachers, and for providing young and capable teachers for its pupils, is made.

INDUSTRY AFTER THE WAR

Persons who predict that the present prosperity in the industries of this country is wholly temporary, and will fade when war orders cease, should turn their attention to the aims and purposes of the French industrial commission now visiting this country.

The primary object of the visit is to study American manufacturing methods and business organization. The fact is a tacit admission of a superiority that European nations realize they must imitate if they would succeed in their industrial restoration after the war. But the significant thing about the commission's visit is the announcement of the things which this country must be called upon to furnish Europe before she is set on her feet commercially. A member of the commission, for example, states that about \$160,000,000 worth of machinery was purchased from Germany each year by France before the war. The French are now turning to this country to supply that order.

To this country, too, the world is turning for dyestuffs. Many of the processes which Germany used really were discovered in this country, and American ingenuity now is perfecting processes and organizing wholesale production of many materials formerly to be had only from Germany. Statements from the French commission suggest how this country may become a market place for Europe long after the war orders have ceased.

FENCERS' CLUB HAS HOUSEWARMING

Celebrates Establishment in New Quarters—Entertaining Program Is Enjoyed.

When cries of "make way for the horses" echoed through the quarters of the Washington Fencers' Club, where scores of society folks were dancing at the "housewarming" party given by the club yesterday, there was a veritable stampede to avoid collision with hosts of diplomats, diplomats and debutantes all huddled in a mass to one side of the hall waiting the entry of the equines. "Come, give me my horse," commanded Dr. Scott D. Breckinridge, one of the country's champion fencers.

There some one passed two small, rubber-tired velocipedes to the fencer, and everybody present realized that their fears of being crushed under the hoofs of horses loomed in ball room were unwarranted. The velocipedes were used as "horses" in the tiffing match between Dr. Breckinridge and J. A. MacLaughlin, which caused much merriment.

The housewarming was given to celebrate the establishment of the club in its new quarters at 1441 Connecticut avenue. More than 300 persons, including many of the leading society men and women of the Capital, attended.

The first contest was a saber bout between J. B. Parker and Antonio Papano, maître d'armes of the club. The events were exhibited in the ball room. A broom fight between C. L. Bouve and Mr. MacLaughlin, proved to be a feature of the entertainment. A dueling sword bout was also staged between Mr. Bouve and Mr. Papano.

The principal contest for the season on the club's program will be that for the championship of the South, which will be fought in the ball room. The contest will be held on February 5, next.

The appearance of Daphne, the young and charming ward of Yester, fresh from her school in France, offers a grave problem, but Mrs. Bargas is assured by Yester that he intends her for a help and is installed as secretary.

How she is accused of misrepresenting some pearls, and then in turn of being deceived by the young man. Bargas, the last act of the play quite thrilling, and offer sufficient complications of situation to keep John Vanstitt, the former Cynthia, whom Yester really loves, appears, asks for help and is installed as secretary.

Although the same observation on the late effort of Mr. Vanstitt that was made on his "Guiney" now playing at the New York, may be made, to wit: "That Mr. Vanstitt's play is slight, but it is charming, and adds one more to the number of really excellent plays from which the public may now take its choice"—one hesitates over calling it English comedy. For this play is about as near to the standard as any play we have seen in a long time.

However, the dialogue of "The Chief" is very clever, fresh and spontaneous. It is above all things a natural play, played by natural people. Even if the crisis and climax are forced together, the dialogue to largely support the first two of its own weight, nobody cares, for the cast is good, and the dialogue very strong indeed.

George Graham and Connelley Bailey were well cast as the youthful sweethearts, Tris and Laura. The latter, the woman who wanted him and did not get him, was acceptable. Katherine Steward as the designing female-in-law, was convincing. Minor parts are equally handled.

Take a fascinating mountain girl; have her meet an equally poetic but forceful young bachelor, who thinks he will take only a fatherly interest in her, but does more; introduce into the plot a proud old "moonshiner," her father, and an equally proud but sullen cousin, his uncle, but-failed to marry her, and mix all these with a classical Kentucky feud, and throw in some good comedy characters, then you have the story of "The Trail of the Lonesome Pine," which delighted a large audience at Polite Theater last night.

"The Trail of the Lonesome Pine," the story of a mining promoter, meets June, Miss Florence Rittenhouse, at the foot of the "lonesome pine" which presiding in the mountains. The story is told by her father, Judd Tolliver, Mark Kent, Hale, after buying her father's coal lands, decides to leave the valley and go to the mountains. This seriously interferes with the plans of her cousin, Dave, who is a "moonshiner" and is in the habit of selling his whisky to the army and finally, via the gossip route, reveals the feud between the Tollivers and the other families of the valley. The story is told by her father, Judd Tolliver, Mark Kent, Hale, after buying her father's coal lands, decides to leave the valley and go to the mountains. This seriously interferes with the plans of her cousin, Dave, who is a "moonshiner" and is in the habit of selling his whisky to the army and finally, via the gossip route, reveals the feud between the Tollivers and the other families of the valley.

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Play and Player at the Theaters

NATIONAL.

Just as everyone was bemoaning the fact that John Drew had not signified a return to the stage this fall, the announcement was made that he was to appear in a new play, "The Chief," by Horace Annesley Vachell, which had its premiere performance last night at the National Theater.

Mr. Drew in the role of Lord Yester, the staid widower, who marries his first love despite the plot and counterplot of the feminine members of his family, is as satisfying as ever, playing with a surety and capability of touch which seems always to put the entire company at ease.

Laura Pope Crews, in the role of Mrs. Vanstitt, the widow whose sudden appearance in England is just in time to save Yester from the wife of the Baroness family, his "in-law," by a dead wife, is an excellent foil for Mr. Drew. True to the accepted style of eligible Englishman, "The Chief," Lord Yester, manages to engineer his own romance successfully although in concerted effort with Mrs. Bargas and her daughter, mother and sister, respectively, of his former wife, Alicia Bargas, strain every nerve to keep him in the family.

Two years previous to the time when the play opens, Yester had fallen in love with the Cynthia who afterward became Mrs. Vanstitt, but through a deception of the part of Mrs. Bargas, he is convinced that she loves another, and so marries Alicia Bargas. That unhappy lady dies early, and Emily Bargas is left in practical possession of the home of Yester. All goes well and Mrs. Bargas is almost sure of her catch for Emily when the first cloud comes on the horizon.

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BELASCO.

The Briton may be dull in perceiving the point of a pun, but the same indication is given to him as to come to the English authorities, an immense audience at the Belasco Theater decreed last night when Cyril Harcourt's London and New York success, "A Pair of Silk Stockings," opened a week's engagement.

The author has written a text that bristles with wit and satire, and he has moved it to the stage with the same glib and ample excuse for manifold and delicious bits of humor, epigrams, and situations.

The play is so bountiful with amusing things that it would be just as hopeless to point them out as it is to try to distinguish between the excellence of the cast.

A pair of silk stockings invades an English country house of the better class on the limbs of a recent divorcee. They are not exhibited to any great extent in the opening scene, but they do perform the very important function of keeping inactive the pair of legs supporting the dowdier though less conspicuous principal of the play, Miss Annesley. Miss Annesley, the wife of the divorcee, is a former admirer of the divorcee. The former occupant of the room retains the undivided and undisputed possession of the house, and her ex-husband concealed in a closet. Mistaking him for a burglar, the pair bind him with the dainty silk hose, which gives the play its title. The husband, who is a former admirer of the divorcee, is a former admirer of the divorcee. The former occupant of the room retains the undivided and undisputed possession of the house, and her ex-husband concealed in a closet. 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